

**Town Of Needham Board of Selectman
Minutes for April 7, 2009
Needham Town Hall**

6:45 p.m. Informal Session:

7:00 p.m. Call To Order:

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was convened by Chairman James Healy at 7:00 p.m. Those present were: John Bulian, Daniel P. Matthews, Gerald Wasserman, Denise Garlick, James Healy, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and Recording Secretary Greg Cooper.

7:00 p.m. Property Tax Relief:

Mr. Healy opened the public hearing to receive input on proposed changes to the Town's senior property tax relief programs. Mr. Healy stated that the issue of senior property tax relief has been an issue the Board has been examining for nearly a year. He acknowledged receiving correspondence from several residents offering suggestions and recommendations on tax relief for seniors.

Roderick Macleod, 33 Mills Road, read a statement outlining some of the challenges being faced by seniors on a fixed income. He stated that many are living off interest from their savings and social security. He stated that the circuit breaker and Town Property Tax Assistance Program are good but they do not go far enough. Mr. Macleod also stated that any program should be easily accessible.

Mr. Wasserman reviewed the recommendations to go before Town Meeting including changing the age and income limits of the 41C program, establishing a Town match for the Senior Property Tax Assistance Program, and better promoting the availability of these programs. He stated that there is general agreement that a means test is a necessary element in property tax relief programs.

The Board discussed the proposal for the Town to match voluntary contributions to the Senior Property Tax Assistance Program up to \$25,000 annually. Mr. Macleod stated that the proposed program enhancements are a start but more needs to

be done.

Mr. Matthews stated that the increased reliance on property tax to fund government services will continue. He stated that seniors are not the only ones having difficulty paying their property taxes. Mr. Healy mentioned that he had received three emails from residents that were not seniors that expressed difficulty in making their quarterly tax bill payments. Mr. Matthews stated that efforts must be made to reduce the property tax burden by looking at other revenue sources or reducing expectations of government services. Mr. Wasserman agreed with Mr. Matthews. Mr. Wasserman did state that the proposed programs can help by providing nearly \$2,000 in relief for qualifying seniors.

7:45 p.m. Consent Agenda

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen vote to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

CONSENT AGENDA *=Backup attached

1. **In support of the Needham Business Association's campaign designed to stimulate the Needham Shopping experience, ratify permission for each Saturday in April 2009, to be "meter-free" in the downtown area for the "April Treasure Hunt."**
2. **Accept the following donations to the Needham Park and Recreation's 2009 Arts in the Park fund:**
 - **\$700 from the Exchange Club of Needham**
 - **\$500 from Louise Condon Realty, Inc.**
 - **\$700 from Dedham Savings Bank**
 - **\$25 from Needham Business Association**
3. *** Approve and sign the 2009 Arbor Day Proclamation, which proclaims the last Friday in April as Arbor Day in the Town of Needham and encourages residents to support all efforts to protect our trees and woodlands for future generations to come.**
4. *** Approve new Ambulance Billing Rates for 2009 as noted below. Rates were last increased in 2006. Basic Life Support: Current Fee: \$475 Proposed Fee: \$500 Advanced Life Support 1: Current Fee: \$550 Proposed Fee: \$575**
5. **Approve request from the Needham Cultural Council to use the Town Common and Garrity Way to conduct**

- its third annual Spring Arts Festival on May 30, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
6. Accept the donation of \$250 to the Needham Youth Commission from Middlesex Savings Bank. The monies will be used to fund the Youth Commission's Stay At Home Parent program for Parents of Kindergarten to 6th grade.
 7. Extend "Free Saturday Parking" for the downtown area through the month of April 2009 as the Needham Business Association continues its shopping stimulus event "Treasure Hunt".
 8. * Water & Sewer Abatement Order #1086
 9. Approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the Employment Contract between the Town and the Fire Chief for the period January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2011.

Second: Mr. Wasserman. Unanimously approved 5-0.

7:50 p.m. Babson College Scholarships:
Melissa Shaak, Babson College Director of Financial Aid, appeared before the Board with this year's recommended candidates for the Town's Babson College Scholarships. Each year Babson College provides a number of scholarships to local residents. The Board expressed it's appreciate for the long standing partnership.
Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen vote to award the Town of Needham Babson Scholarships to the following applicants: Travis Jonasson, Robert Kotzen, and Samantha Wolfson, who are returning students; Lizabeth Bell, who is an incoming two year MBA student/merit scholarship recipient; and to Heinz Brinkhaus and Flynn Lincoln who have been admitted for this September, and are currently undecided on where to attend.
Second: Mr. Wasserman. Unanimously approved 5-0.

Ms. Garlick asked Ms. Shaak to thank those involved in proactively responding to the recent Nora virus outbreak at the school. She was impressed with the school's aggressive response.

7:55 p.m. Citizens' Petition/Quiet Zone:
Duncan Allen, Chairman of the Transportation Committee, appeared before the Board to discuss the citizens' petition to include a warrant article to

conduct a study on the feasibility of creating a quiet zone in Needham. A "Quiet Zone" involves implementing mitigation action at an interchange of railroads and streets so that trains are not required to sound their horns. Mr. Healy asked Mr. Duncan to summarize the Transportation Committee's previous examination of this issue. Mr. Duncan stated that the Committee's preliminary look estimated that it would cost between \$100,000 and \$200,000 per intersection to meet the "Quiet Zone" requirements. He stated that it would help to refine the estimate through the use of a professional with expertise in the area because the federal requirements are very complex. The Board asked several questions on the standards for establishing "quiet zones" and the degree to which they have been established in Massachusetts. Mr. Healy stated that this initiative could potentially be a large capital project at a time when the Town is facing severe budget constraints. Mr. Wasserman asked about the potential to move the West Street Station to the South side of West Street to avoid that intersection. Mr. Duncan stated that this would probably be more expensive than establishing the "quiet zone." The Board agreed that safety is the primary factor. Mr. Healy stated that Town Meeting needs to know that the Town has previously examined this issue and that the creation of a "quiet zone" would be a significant capital outlay. Jeanne McKnight handed the Board a petition from residents interested in privately supporting the creation of quiet zones.

8:25 p.m. Utility Rates:

David Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, requested the Board approve several sewer rate credits. Mr. Davison stated that the credits would amount to \$92.64 for the average single family.

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen vote to approve a credit of \$8.64 per residential account for sewer rate relief due to the lower MWRA assessment for FY2009 to be applied to the FY2009 fourth quarter sewer bills, and further move that the Board approve a one time \$43.25 flat rate credit for every residential and commercial sewer account; move that the Board approve the following

credits as rate relief set forth below:

Regular water usage billed between April 1, 2009
and June 30, 2009

Step two: a credit of \$1.00 per hundred cubic feet
of usage

Step three: a credit of \$0.75 per hundred cubic
feet of usage

Further move that the Board authorize a one time
\$17.50 flat rate credit for residential accounts.

Second: Mr. Wasserman. Unanimously approved 5-0.

8:30 p.m. Sign Notice of Traffic Regulation - Highland
Terrace:

Richard Merson, DPW Director, appeared before the
Board with a request to establish a no parking zone
on the south side of Highland Terrace near Highland
Avenue. The Traffic Management Advisory Committee
recommended the regulation.

**Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen
vote to approve and sign the Notice of Traffic
Regulation Permit #P09-04-07 for Highland Terrace,
Parking Prohibited During Certain hours, South side
from Highland Avenue to a point 150 feet east of
Highland Avenue - No Parking 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday.**

Second: Mr. Wasserman. Unanimously approved 5-0.

8:30 p.m. Town Manager:

1. Debt Policy:

Ms. Fitzpatrick requested the Board approve a
recommendation to amend the debt management
policy of the Town to formalize the existing
practice of allocating 3% of General Fund
Revenue for debt service.

**Motion by Mr. Wasserman that the Board of
Selectmen vote to approve the Town of Needham
Debt Management Policies as amended.**

Second: Mr. Bulian. Unanimously approved 5-0.

2. Town Manager Report:

a) Newman School Project:

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the initial
estimate of design for the Newman School

Project was \$1.3 million, but the PPBC & MSBA recommend funding only a schematic design at a cost of \$450,000 to \$500,000. The change does not affect the proposed schedule of the project.

- b) Fox 25 News Broadcast:
Ms. Fitzpatrick wanted to remind the Board that Fox 25 News will be broadcasting live from the Town Common on April 24th.

8:35 p.m. Board Discussion:

1. Stabilization Fund for Minuteman Regional High School:
The Board discussed the Minuteman School's request to establish a stabilization fund at its last meeting. Mr. Matthews stated that he has asked to appear before the Finance Committee on the request, which is an Article in the upcoming Special Town Meeting Warrant. He stated that the request is only one mechanism being proposed to get better control over the capital and maintenance budget of the school. He stated that the school will continue to have fiscal problems if enrollment numbers are not improved. Mr. Matthews feels the new superintendent is willing to work with member communities and is taking the right approach toward strengthening the school's financial health. Mr. Wasserman and Ms. Garlick were hesitant to vote on the proposed establishment of a stabilization fund without having a clear understanding of the fund's spending guidelines. The Board discussed endorsing the establishment of the fund, in principle.
Motion by Mr. Matthews that the Board of Selectmen vote to endorse, in principle, the Article in the 2009 Annual Town Meeting Warrant the establishment of a stabilization fund by the Minuteman Regional Vocation Technical School District, beginning July 1, 2009.
Second: Mr. Wasserman. Unanimously approved 5-0.
2. Committee Reports:
Mr. Healy stated that this is his last meeting as a Selectmen. He thanked a number of people who have supported him over the years. He stated that the

Town has a great management team and the people employed by the Town do an outstanding job. Mr. Healy mentioned a few of the high and low points during his service on the Board. Each of the Board members thanked Mr. Healy for his contribution and service to the Town and recognized the passion with which he served the Town.

9:10p.m. Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen vote to adjourn the April 7, 2009 Needham Board of Selectmen Meeting.

Second: Mr. Wasserman. Unanimously approved 5-0.